

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,776,049 to Takahashi ("Takahashi") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,876,326 to Takamura et al. ("Takamura")

Claims 14, 16, and 17 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takahashi in view of Takamura, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6110106 to MacKinnon et al. ("MacKinnon").

Claims 1-14 and 16-17 have been canceled.

Claim 15 has previously been withdrawn.

Claims 18-35 have been newly added and are submitted for prosecution.

Rejection of Claims 1-13 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-13 have been canceled.

Rejection of Claims 14, 16, and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 14, 16, and 17 have been canceled.

Submission of New Claims 18-35

Applicants hereby submit new claims 18-35 for prosecution. Claims 18-35 are submitted to point out more clearly what Applicants regard as the invention. Support for the newly added independent claim 18 can be found, at least, in the specification on page 12, line 24 to page 13, line 5; page 13, line 19 to page 15, line 5; and in Figs. 2, 4, and 6. Support for the newly added dependent claims 19-35 can be found throughout the specification and in the figures.

Specifically, Applicants' independent claim 18 recites, in part, an endoscope imaging apparatus that includes a tubular member, which includes a first end and a second end. The tubular member defines an inner space that extends therethrough and between the first end and the second end. The optical system is hermetically joined to the first end and the imaging element is hermetically joined to the second end, thereby airtightly sealing the inner space. The tubular member further includes a bellows portion. The bellows portion is deformable while maintaining the airtight seal of the inner space in response to relative movements of the optical system support member and the imaging element support member in a direction along an optical axis of the optical system and in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis of the optical system.

In contrast to Applicants' invention, Takahashi teaches a structure for adjusting only the distance between optical axes of an optical system and an imaging element. Takahashi does not teach or suggest a structure that enables relative movements of the optical system and the imaging element. Further, Takahashi does not teach that such relative movements are in directions inclusive of a direction of an optical axis and a direction perpendicular to the optical axis. Moreover, unlike Applicants' invention, Takahashi neither discloses nor suggests a structure to maintain the airtight seal of the inner space between the optical system and the imaging element.

Takamura relates to a structure to including a bellows member used as a slideable cover to prevent electromagnetic interference. Takamura does not teach or suggest using a bellows for hermetically joining an optical system and an imaging element and creating an airtight seal between the imaging optical unit and the imaging element. Further, there is nothing taught or suggested in either Takahashi or Takamura that creates a motivation to combine the references.

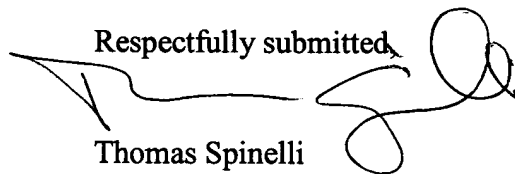
In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that Takahashi and Takamura, whether taken alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest the subject matter recited in claim 18 as each of these references fails at least to teach or suggest an endoscope imaging apparatus that includes a structure that enables relative movements of the optical system and the imaging element, where such relative movements are in directions inclusive of the direction of an optical axis and the direction perpendicular to the optical axis. Moreover, neither reference discloses nor suggests a structure to maintain the airtight seal of the inner space between the optical system and the imaging element.

Claims 19-35, which depend directly or indirectly from the independent claim 18, incorporate all of the limitations of independent claim 18 and are therefore patentably distinct over Takahashi and Takamura for at least those reasons provided for claim 18.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, applicants respectfully requests reconsideration, withdrawal of all rejections, and allowance of all pending claims in due course.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Spinelli', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

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